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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

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COUNTRY Korea

DATE

INFO.

SUBJECT Political Information: Persecution of Christians
in North Korea

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SUPPLEMENT

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EVALUATION OF SOURCE

EVALUATION OF CONTENT



1. Wonsung Church in Taedaso (Tashito) (124-26, 37-47)

a. After 15 August 1945 plans were made to enlarge the Wonsung Church. A building and 40 pyongs of land were purchased from the local Self-Government Association. The building was repaired and used as a church for six months.

b. The Taedaso City People's Committee then stated that they wished to use the church as an office building and that the church must be removed to some other location. This decision was protested by the minister and he refused to evacuate the church. The authorities then told the minister that the church occupied land which would come up for redistribution in the land reformation program and again stated that they would use the church as an office building. All equipment was then forcibly removed from the church and placed along the roadside and a signboard was placed upon the building which bore the names of the following organizations: Democratic Young Man's League (民青); Farmers' Association (農民組合); Labor Association (勞働組合); and Fire Brigade (消防隊). Desks, tables, and other office equipment were then moved into the building.

c. The above facts were reported to the Gun People's Committee and to Soviet Army Headquarters of Yongchun Gun but no reply was received from either office. The first Sunday after the church was taken over by the above groups, the minister attempted to hold services there in spite of their presence but the office workers ridiculed the services and continued to smoke and talk throughout the service. The following week the offices of the above mentioned groups were removed from the building and it was restored to the church. The minister does not know if any action was taken by the Gun People's Committee or Soviet Army Headquarters but states that the office workers gave as their reason for evacuation of the church that they did not want to engage in conduct which would cause trouble to the church and which would give rise to international discussion.

d. A short time later the Gun People's Committee again notified the minister that the church would be taken over in one week and used for a People's School.

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Permission for such use was refused, but a few days later the president of the school, teachers and students arrived at the church carrying desks, seats, books and other equipment. The minister summoned his congregation for worship and refused admittance to the president of the school. The school president then stated that he had received an order from the Gun People's Committee to occupy the building but that he was ignorant of the circumstances there and therefore would make no attempt at occupation until a decision was made by the Gun People's Committee.

e. The above facts were reported to the Gun People's Committee and Soviet Army Headquarters of Yongchon Gun. The following day the Soviet Army Commander, the Chief of the Gun People's Committee, and the Chief of the Peace Preservation Office in Yongchon Gun came to the church. The Soviet Army Commander explained that education was much more necessary than religion, and for this reason the church would have to give way to the school.

f. The minister reported this decision to his superiors in the West Inspection Department of the Union of Presbyterian Churches. They in turn reported it to the Pyongan Province People's Committee, to the Provisional People's Committee and to Soviet Army Headquarters of North Pyongan Province, and to Soviet Army General Commanding Headquarters for North Korea. The matter was finally referred back to the North Pyongan Province People's Committee who dismissed it as unimportant.

g. The school remained in the building but the congregation continued to use it as a church on Sundays. Some time later the Chief of the Gun People's Committee and Chief of the Peace Preservation Office for Yongchon Gun arrested a deacon of the church named HAM Suk-ho / HAM Suk-ho / (咸錫浩) for failure of the church to completely evacuate the premises. He was imprisoned for nine days during which time he was questioned as to the reason for not completely evacuating the premises and lectured upon the necessity of showing gratitude to the Soviet Army. The congregation continued to use the building on Sundays until January 1947 when several members of the congregation were arrested and imprisoned for twenty days. They included CHUE Sa-yong / CHOE Sa-yong / (崔 錫用), an officer of the church; CHANG Kuk-paek / (張 國 柏), a deacon; CHANG Bo-bu / CHANG Po-pu / (張 保 富), BANG Jae-hang / BANG Chae-hang / (朴 載 恒), HAM Jin-taek / HAM Chin-taek / (咸 振 澤), and HAM Suk-kyu / HAM Sok-kyu / (咸錫奎). They were released when they agreed to move out of the building and not to use it longer as a church. The minister was in Simiju (Shingishu) (124-24,40-06) at this time and was ordered by his superiors not to return to Taedaeado as they feared that he would also be arrested. He left North Korea clandestinely.

h. Worship in Taedaeado is now being carried on in private homes.

2. Other Anti-Christian Incidents

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a. Considerable feeling exists between Christians and farmers who have benefited from the land redistribution program. This is attributed to the fact that many Christians were landholders, and the farmers who benefited by the land reformation program are still afraid that the former owners may somehow regain their former property. Labor Party propaganda is aimed at keeping the farmers aroused and directing their attention to Christians who are described as "reactionaries who now wish to take your gains from you". Attention of the farmers is thereby directed away from the high material tax they are forced to pay and the low fixed price at which many of their remaining commodities are forcibly purchased by the Government. The irritation and indignation which they feel is taken out upon the Christians.

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b. In the early part of 1946 an anti-Christian riot took place in Yongchon Gun of North Pyongan Province. The minister of the Dae Sung / Tae Sul / Church (大成教會) was beaten and forced to walk through the streets carrying a sign bearing pro-Communist slogans. At the same time a minister of the First Church of Yongampo (Ryugampo) (124-22,39-56) was beaten to death with clubs. The church gates and windows were destroyed and a deacon of the Central Church of Yongampo named CHANG (張) was injured so severely that he did not recover for several months. A hospital operated by this deacon was completely destroyed.

c. In March 1946 farmers incited by Communist propaganda destroyed the church bells of West Church and East Church in Uiju (Gishu) (124-32,40-12) and beat the pastor severely. [REDACTED] Note: Confirmed by other sources).

d. The above incidents were reported to Soviet Army Headquarters in Sinuiju by the Union of Presbyterian Churches of Uisan (Uisan-dong, 125-16,40-24?) and a protest was made that freedom of religion was not being observed. Soviet Army Headquarters then promised to make arrangements for the repair of all damages but had done nothing up to January 1947.

e. In January 1947 many pastors in the area of the Union of Presbyterian Churches of Pyong-buk (Pyongan-pukto?) were beaten. A pastor named LI (李) was severely beaten.

3. Christian Attitude Toward Elections

a. In the November 1946 elections for members of the Provincial People's Committee, the Allied Union of Presbyterian Churches for the five provinces of North Korea informed officials that they would not participate in the elections because election day fell on Sunday. They adopted five resolutions:

- (1) Politics should be separate from religion.
- (2) All anti-religious education shall be opposed.
- (3) Sunday shall be kept only for worship.
- (4) Staff members of the church cannot be members of any political group.
- (5) The church shall be used only as a place of worship.

b. Christian members of all churches were instructed not to vote in the elections. Members of the People's Committees and Peace Preservation Offices, however, forced many Christians to vote. Because of the especially vigorous opposition of the Union of Presbyterian Churches of Pyong-chong (平定老會), they were later singled out for retaliation.

c. CHANG Myong-rok [CHANG Myong-rok] (張明綠), a member of the Chu Dung Church of the Union of Presbyterian Churches in Yongchon (126-22,39-04?) refused to vote in the election. The following day a member of the Communist Party came to his house and conscripted all his property and ejected him from his home. He was forced to carry a sign on his back through the town stating that he did not vote because he believed Sunday to be a day of worship. Persecution of CHANG has continued and he has been beaten on several occasions and driven from place to place. The above incident was reported to the Peace Preservation Office of Yongampo but no action was taken.

4. Pictures of Stalin and Lenin Hung in Churches

Officials have forced the churches to hang pictures of Stalin, Lenin, KIM Il-sung (金日成), and propaganda slogans, such as "Down with KIM Koo and RHEE Syngman." Ministers of the church refused to allow the pictures and slogans to remain in the churches after they were hung there by members of the Peace Preservation Office. In some churches the Christians responsible for the removal of the pictures were imprisoned.

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